

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-11 ISO-00 SAM-01 INRE-00 SSO-00

NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAB-01

ACDA-05 EB-07 AF-06 /094 W
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O P 311430Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3767

INFO AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY NOUACKCHOTT PRIORITY

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ALGIERS 0251

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AG, MO, SS, MA

SUBJECT: SAHARA: ALGERIAN ROUNDUP

1. SUMMARY: ABERKANE, CHIEF NORTH AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS AT FOREIGN MINISTRY, REPEATS NECESSITY FOR RESPECT FOR PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION BY REFERENDUM, IMPLIES SOME FLEXIBILITY AS TO REFERENDUM ORGANIZATION, AND FORECASTS CONTINUED CLASHES IF NO POLITICAL SOLUTION FOUND. OBSERVERS SPECULATE THAT NECESSITY FOR PEACEFUL POLITICAL SOLUTION BEING REALIZED AND THAT CURRENT SPATE OF DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY MAY BE LEADING TO COMPROMISE. INDEED IT MAY, BUT CONCRETE INDICATIONS LACKING AND ALGERIAN MILITARY PREPARATIONS CONTINUE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN CONVERSATION WITH ABERKANE, CHIEF NORTH AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS AT FOREIGN MINISTRY, ON JAN 31 I ASKED HIM WHAT ALGERIANS BELIEVED PROSPECTS WERE FOR DIPLOMATIC RESOLUTION TO CURRENT SAHARA PROBLEM.

3. ABERKANE REPLIED:

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A. ALGERIANS DID NOT WANT WAR, THEY WANTED POLITICAL SOLUTION;

B. ALTHOUGH HE PERSONALLY NOT INFORMED AS TO EXACTLY WHAT BOUMEDIENE TELLING CURRENT ARAB EMISSARIES, ALGERIANS WERE IN GENERAL SKEPTICAL ABOUT LIKELIHOOD OF SUCCESS OF CURRENT ARAB MEDIATION EFFORTS. THEY BELIEVED IT UNLIKELY ARABS COULD SUCCEED IN PERSUADING MOROCCO TO MAKE CONCESSIONS NECESSARY TO MAKE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT ACCEPTABLE TO ALGERIANS;

C. MAIN THRUST OF ALGERIAN DIPLOMACY WOULD BE THROUGH UN; ALGERIANS WANT UN SECRETARY GENERAL TO WORK ACTIVELY TO ENSURE THAT PRINCIPLES OF SELF-DETERMINATION ENDORSED BY PASSAGE TANZANIAN RESOLUTION BE APPLIED IN SAHARA, AND THAT SAHRAOUI BE GIVEN FULL OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS BY GENUINE REFERENDUM.

4. I ASKED IF ALGERIANS VIEWED REFERENDUM ORGANIZED BY UN AS ONLY ROUTE OR WOULD REFERENDUM ORGANIZED BY OTHERS BE ACCEPTABLE. ABERKANE RESPONDED THAT ALGERIANS HAD ALWAYS BEEN WILLING TO ATTEND FOUR-POWER MEETING OF MAURITANIA, MOROCCO AND SPAIN AS PROPOSED BY SPANISH, AND REMAINED WILLING TO ATTEND SUCH MEETING TO DISCUSS HOW SELF-DETERMINATION MIGHT BE APPLIED. WHEN I ASKED IF HE WAS SAYING THAT ALGERIANS MIGHT ACCEPT RESULTS OF REFERENDUM ORGANIZED BY THESE FOUR POWERS, HE AVOIDED DIRECT RESPONSE AND REPEATED:

A) MAIN THRUST OF ALGERIAN DIPLOMACY WAS DIRECTED TOWARD FINDING POLITICAL SOLUTION THROUGH UN FRAMEWORK;

B) ALGERIANS DID NOT WANT WAR;

C) THEY WERE PREPARED TO DISCUSS ANY WAY THAT SELF-DETERMINATION PRINCIPLE COULD BE APPLIED.

5. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT ALGERIANS ARE NOT INTERESTED IN TRI-LATERAL DEAL WITH MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA. HE SAID ALGERIANS KNEW MOROCCANS WERE PREPARED TO MAKE DEAL ON BASIS SHARING OF ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND EVEN PARTITION OF SAHARA. ALGERIANS, HE SAID, WERE NOT INTERESTED; ALL THEY WANTED WAS OPPORTUNITY FOR SAHRAOUI TO EXPRESS THEIR WISHES FREELY.
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ALGIERS 0251

6. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION AS TO CURRENT STATUS ON BATTLEFIELD, HE RESPONDED THAT ALGERIANS WERE UPSET THAT COUNTRIES REGARDED AS PROPAGANDA THEIR CLAIM THAT ALGERIAN UNIT ATTACKED WAS SIMPLY BRINGING MERCY SUPPLIES TO REFUGEES. HE EXPLAINED THAT ALGERIAN ARMY ONLY ORGANIZATION IN COUNTRY CAPABLE OF CARRYING OUT SUCH A MISSION AND IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT IT WOULD BE ARMED GIVEN CURRENT MILITARY SITUATION IN SAHARA.

7. HE DENIED REPORTS THAT THERE WAS "TRUCE" IN AREA. HE POINTED OUT THAT HAD ALGERIANS WANTED WAR THEY COULD EASILY HAVE REINFORCED UNIT UNDER ATTACK; INSTEAD, ALGERIAN MILITARY UNIT HAD SIMPLY WITHDRAWN. NEVERTHELESS, POLISARIO UNITS IN AREA WERE CONTINUING TO FIGHT AND WOULD FIGHT ON IN FUTURE. HE SAID THAT UNTIL POLITICAL SOLUTION WAS FOUND, CLASH SUCH AS THAT AT AMBALLA BOUND TO BE REPEATED.

8. COMMENT: SOME OBSERVERS HERE BELIEVE THAT CURRENT SPURT OF DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY MAY HAVE ALREADY PROVIDED ALGERIANS ONE TACTICAL ADVANTAGE BY FORCING OTHER ARAB STATES TO FOCUS ON ISSUE, TO APPRECIATE BETTER DANGERS IN SITUATION, AND TO
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BECOME MORE INVOLVED. IN PROCESS OF GETTING INVOLVED, EVEN TO EXTENT OF SIMPLY BEING ON TELEPHONE OR SENDING REPRESENTATIVES,

OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES, IN THIS VIEW, MAY HAVE ALREADY BEEN LURED AWAY FROM POSITION OF SUPPORT FOR MOROCCAN CAUSE TO AT LEAST OSTENSIBLE NEUTRALITY.

9. THERE ARE THOSE OBSERVERS WHO BELIEVE THAT CONTINUATION OF CURRENT HIGH LEVEL OF TENSION, WITH NO PROSPECTS THAT IT CAN BE RESOLVED TO EITHER MOROCCO'S OR ALGERIA'S ADVANTAGE, ADVANTAGE, CAANOT LAST AND THAT SOME DIPLOMATIC COVERUP IS GOING TO EMERGE. CURRENT SPATE OF DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY ENCOURAGES ADHERENTS OF THIS VIEW.

10. WHILE THERE ARE PRESUMABLY DOORS OPEN TO ARRIVE AT THIS RESOLUTION, AND WE WOULD BE AMONG LAST TO KNOW OF ANY MOVEMENT, WE SEE NO CONCRETE INDICATIONS YET THAT EITHER ALGERIANS OR MOROCCANS SERIOUS ABOUT OPENING THEM.

11. ON MILITARY SIDE THERE IS EVIDENCE OF SHARP INCREASE IN THE PACE OF ALGERIAN INTRA-COUNTRY MILITARY BUILDUP, WITH EVERYTHING HEADING WEST, AND ALSO INDICATIONS RPT INDICATIONS OF SOVIET MILITARY AIRLIFT TO ALGERIA CURRENTLY TAKING PLACE.

12. SUCH ACTIVITY CONSISTENT WITH EITHER ALGERIAN INTENTION TO STEP UP ACTIVITY OR FLET NEED TO PREPARE TO DEFEND THEMSELVES AND POLISARIO AGAINST MOROCCAN SWEEP AS IT PROCEEDS TOWARD TIFARITI, MAHBES AND TINDOUF.

13. WE CAN OBSERVE ONLY THAT ALGERIANS TOOK DIPLOMATIC DEFEAT IN MADRID ACCORD AND NOW MILITARY DEFEAT AT AMGALA. IT WOULD BE UNCHARACTERISTIC OF THEM TO ACCEPT SUCH EMBARRASMENTS WITHOUT SHARP CONCRETE REACTION OF SOME SORT.LYNE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, TERRITORIAL CLAIMS, SELFDETERMINATION, REFERENDUMS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ALGIER00251
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760037-0977
From: ALGIERS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t1976012/aaaaabiq.tel
Line Count: 199
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11 MAY 2004 by ellisoob>; APPROVED <02 SEP 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SAHARA: ALGERIAN ROUNDUP
TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, PDEV, SS, MO, MR, AG, UN
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006